

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 314

October 6, 1999, 2:26 p.m.
Page S-12078 Temp. Record

LABOR-HHS-EDUCATION/Tax Hikes If Over Budget

SUBJECT: Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000 . . . S. 1650. Nickles motion to table the Lautenberg amendment No. 2267 to the Nickles amendment No. 1851, as amended.

ACTION: MOTION TO TABLE AGREED TO, 54-46

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1650, the Departments of Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 2000, will provide \$324.2 billion in new budget authority, which is \$22.531 billion more than provided in fiscal year (FY) 1999 and is \$911.0 million less than requested. This amount includes advance discretionary and mandatory appropriations and \$9.902 billion in spending from trust funds. Budget authority for fiscal year 2000 discretionary spending will total \$84.018 billion.

The Nickles amendment, as amended (see vote No. 313), would express the sense of the Senate that Congress should ensure that the fiscal year 2000 appropriations measures do not result in an on-budget deficit (excluding the surpluses generated by the Social Security trust funds) by adopting an across-the-board reduction in all discretionary appropriations sufficient to eliminate such deficit if necessary. The amendment would also make 2 findings: Congress and the President should balance the budget excluding the surpluses generated by the Social Security trust funds; and Social Security surpluses should only be used for Social Security reform or to reduce the debt held by the public and should not be spent on other programs.

The Lautenberg substitute amendment would express the sense of the Senate that if there is an on-budget deficit "Congress should fund fiscal year 2000 appropriations, without using budget scorekeeping gimmicks, by closing special-interest tax loopholes and using other appropriate offsets" instead of "raiding Social Security surpluses" or cutting discretionary appropriations across the board.

Debate was limited by unanimous consent. After debate, Senator Nickles moved to table the Lautenberg amendment. Generally, those favoring the motion to table opposed the amendment; those opposing the motion to table favored the amendment.

(See other side)

YEAS (54)			NAYS (46)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (53 or 96%)	Democrats (1 or 2%)		Republicans (2 or 4%)	Democrats (44 or 98%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Helms	Edwards	Jeffords	Akaka	Kennedy		
Allard	Hutchinson		Snowe	Baucus	Kerrey		
Ashcroft	Hutchison			Bayh	Kerry		
Bennett	Inhofe			Biden	Kohl		
Bond	Kyl			Bingaman	Landrieu		
Brownback	Lott			Boxer	Lautenberg		
Bunning	Lugar			Breaux	Leahy		
Burns	Mack			Bryan	Levin		
Campbell	McCain			Byrd	Lieberman		
Chafee	McConnell			Cleland	Lincoln		
Cochran	Murkowski			Conrad	Mikulski		
Collins	Nickles			Daschle	Moynihan		
Coverdell	Roberts			Dodd	Murray		
Craig	Roth			Dorgan	Reed		
Crapo	Santorum			Durbin	Reid		
DeWine	Sessions			Feingold	Robb		
Domenici	Shelby			Feinstein	Rockefeller		
Enzi	Smith, Bob (I)			Graham	Sarbanes		
Fitzgerald	Smith, Gordon			Harkin	Schumer		
Frist	Specter			Hollings	Torricelli		
Gorton	Stevens			Inouye	Wellstone		
Gramm	Thomas			Johnson	Wyden		
Grams	Thompson						
Grassley	Thurmond						
Gregg	Voinovich						
Hagel	Warner						
Hatch							

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

NOTE: After the rejection of the Lautenberg amendment the underlying amendment was withdrawn.

Those favoring the motion to table contended:

Our Democratic colleagues, to their credit, have agreed that the Social Security surplus should not be spent at all. In this amendment, they have suggested that if our spending bills this year go over budget, we should raise taxes instead of cutting spending to get back into balance. We do not find our colleagues' suggestion at all surprising, because it is the same alternative they favor every year for every budget problem. Their amendment does not say which taxes they would like to raise beyond making the almost comical suggestion that they should be "appropriate" tax hikes such as tax hikes to close "special-interest loopholes." Should we be relieved that our Democratic colleagues do not favor "inappropriate" tax hikes?

Though our colleagues' amendment does not make clear which taxes Democrats think should be increased, it does serve to show a clear difference between Democrats and Republicans. Republicans do not believe that taxes should be raised. The American people are already being taxed at the highest rate in history (as a percentage of their incomes by all levels of government), and that burden should not be increased, especially considering that we are in prosperous times that have reduced the need for many types of government assistance. As much as our Democratic colleagues may resist the notion, taxes do not always have to go up, and the Federal Government does not always have to get bigger. The Lautenberg amendment says that if it turns out that we have spent into the Social Security surplus we should raise taxes to make up the difference instead of cutting the excess spending. We disagree and urge the rejection of this amendment.

Those opposing the motion to table contended:

Senators have just had a chance to vote on the Nickles amendment, which took a meat-ax approach to the budget mess that has been created by Republicans this year. If we were to follow the plan in that amendment, we would have to cut every discretionary program indiscriminately. Cuts of 10 percent or more would be required in education, Head Start, defense, and every other Federal program. That approach would wreak havoc. Our colleagues frequently lecture us on the need to prioritize; an across-the-board cut, by treating every program equally, fails in that regard. We think our colleagues made their proposal because they understand that there is no way that they can prioritize cuts of the magnitude that may be necessary. They started with an unrealistically low budget estimate of how much will need to be spent this year. When they then put together the spending bills, they knew that there was no way that they could get down to their original low spending estimate, so they just started using budget gimmicks. Now they are saying that we ought to just cut spending across the board to get down to their unrealistic estimate. We will not support such a cut. Instead, we ought to do what is right and increase revenues to the level necessary to avoid spending Social Security funds. The Lautenberg amendment supports that idea. It expresses the sense of the Senate in favor of closing special-interest loopholes and in favor of enacting other appropriate offsets. For instance, we could tax the tobacco companies to get some of the extra money needed. We would much rather tax big tobacco than cut Head Start or any other Federal spending. The Lautenberg amendment clearly gives us a better alternative for protecting Social Security. We urge our colleagues to support this amendment.